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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 000993

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/AND, EUR/ERA, AND S/CT

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [FR](#) [VE](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: FRANCE ON U.S. VENEZUELAN CONCERNS

REF: STATE 25063

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Poloff delivered reftel demarche to Venezuelan Desk Officer Hedi Picquart on February 16. Picquart did not have an immediate formal response to U.S. concerns about Russian weapons sales to Venezuela, but indicated that he would pass our points to French embassies in Moscow, Caracas, and Bogota and elicit their views. However, he posited that FARC had no need for Venezuelan weapons, stating the they were already sufficiently well armed and questioning why 100,000 weapons would be needed for the approximately 17,000 FARC insurgents. Notwithstanding these considerations, Picquart assured us that the GOF would remain vigilant.

2. (C) In other Venezuela matters, Picquart noted that France was pleased with the resumption of dialogue and cooperation between Caracas and Bogota. Picquart underlined that it was Castro, at the Colombians' request, who had calmed Chavez. As to allegations of Chavez's influence in regional political affairs, Picquart said that France had not seen evidence to indicate Caracas was funding Evo Morales in Bolivia, whom he characterized as trying to "civilize himself" and dismissed as a real threat to Bolivian politics. Franco-Venezuelan cultural relations and technical cooperation continued well following Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Renaud Muselier's mid-December visit to Caracas, during which he met with the Vice President and Minister for Foreign Affairs (Chavez was in Cuba at the time). Chavez, whom Picquart described as being on an EU charm offensive, currently has no official visit scheduled to France, but may stop by unofficially in early March while in Europe. Finally, Picquart indicated that the GOF would continue to monitor the human rights situation in Venezuela, and that the GOF would remain watchful as to how Venezuela applies the recently passed press law.
Leach